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SUBJECT: HOLY SEE -- WORLD AIDS DAY

REFS: A) VATICAN 0283; B) VATICAN 1508

¶1. SUMMARY: CARE AND TREATMENT FOR SUFFERERS OF HIV/AIDS AND FIDELITY AND ABSTINENCE TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF THE DISEASE WERE THE HOLY SEE'S KEY MESSAGES FOR WORLD AIDS DAY **¶2003**. IN A STATEMENT DELIVERED NOVEMBER 30, POPE JOHN PAUL II LAMENTED THE CONTINUED SPREAD OF THE VIRUS, "ESPECIALLY IN THE POOREST OF COUNTRIES" AND ENCOURAGED CATHOLICS TO OFFER HOSPITALITY, CARE AND SPIRITUAL SUPPORT TO VICTIMS OF HIV/AIDS. IN A SEPARATE MESSAGE, THE HOLY SEE'S HEALTH MINISTER EQUIVALENT, CARDINAL JAVIER LOZANO BARRAGAN, CALLED FOR GREATER ACCESS BOTH TO GENERIC MEDICINES TO FIGHT AIDS-RELATED OPPORTUNISTIC INFECTIONS AND TO MEDICINES TO HELP CONTROL THE DISEASE ITSELF. END SUMMARY.

¶2. CARDINAL BARRAGAN SAID THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND CIVIL GOVERNMENTS SHOULD PROMOTE EDUCATION CAMPAIGNS THAT "FAVOR THE CULTURE OF LIFE AND RESPONSIBLE LOVE." BARRAGAN ALSO URGED AN INCREASE IN PROGRAMS TO MEET THE HUMANITARIAN, SOCIAL AND HEALTH NEEDS OF THE INCREASING NUMBER OF CHILDREN LEFT ORPHANED BY AIDS. HE SAID EVERY FORM OF EXCLUSION, DISCRIMINATION OR STIGMATIZATION OF HIV/AIDS SUFFERS MUST BE AVOIDED, AND EXPRESSED PARTICULAR CONCERN FOR PRISON INMATES. THE CARDINAL ANNOUNCED THAT HIS DICASTERY WAS PREPARING A HANDBOOK FOR CHURCH WORKERS ON HIV/AIDS IN LIGHT OF THE FACT THAT CATHOLIC RELIGIOUS ORDERS, INSTITUTIONS AND ORGANIZATIONS PROVIDE ABOUT 25 PERCENT OF ALL SOCIAL ASSISTANCE AND 19 PERCENT OF HEALTH CARE WORLDWIDE TO PEOPLE WITH HIV/AIDS.

3.CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS, A FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC RELIEF AGENCIES, HAS CALLED ON ITS 162 MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS TO SUPPORT EFFORTS TO ELIMINATE THE STIGMA AND DISCRIMINATION ASSOCIATED WITH HIV/AIDS. CARITAS INTERNATIONALIS IS THE ONLY NON-UN ORGANIZATION WITH A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH UNAIDS, AND HAS FOR MANY YEARS HAS ORGANIZED SEMINARS FOR BISHOPS, CLERGY, AND LAY PEOPLE TO PROMOTE GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE PANDEMIC. CARITAS AND UNAIDS HAVE PLEDGED TO WORK TOGETHER, FROM THEIR DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES, TO PROMOTE AWARENESS, ESPECIALLY AMONG YOUNG PEOPLE, TO PREVENT NEW INFECTIONS, ADVOCATE FOR THE RIGHTS OF THOSE INFECTED WITH THE VIRUS, AND ELIMINATE DISCRIMINATION AT ALL LEVELS OF SOCIETY.

4.COMMENT: THE HOLY SEE AND ITS RELATED ORGANIZATIONS WORLDWIDE CONTINUE TO BE KEY PLAYERS IN THE CARE AND TREATMENT OF PERSONS WITH HIV/AIDS (REFTELS A AND B). MANY OF THESE ORGANIZATIONS ARE NOW TAKING UP ADVOCACY WORK AIMED AT BUILDING INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR EFFORTS TO COMBAT HIV/AIDS AND AT ENDING DISCRIMINATION AGAINST HIV/AIDS VICTIMS AT ALL SOCIAL LEVELS. HOLY SEE PREVENTION STRATEGIES ARE FOCUSED ON PREMARITAL ABSTINENCE AND FAITHFULNESS WITHIN MARRIAGE. RECENT MEDIA CRITICISM OF THE HOLY SEE'S OPPOSITION TO THE USE OF CONDOMS AS AN EFFECTIVE MEANS OF PREVENTING THE SPREAD OF INFECTION HAS DETRACTED ATTENTION FROM ITS BROAD AND EFFECTIVE WORLDWIDE DEPLOYMENT OF CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES AND MANPOWER TO COMBAT THE AIDS PANDEMIC. END COMMENT.

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